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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1920

WHOLE No. 374

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No. 5

JOHN, VISCOUNT MORLEY, ON LUCRETIVUS¹

I took it into my head that I might do worse than give a day or two to reviving memories of Lucretius, the ancient poet who fits in so closely with leading thoughts, and contests of thought, in our present day, to say nothing of Helvetius, d'Holbach, and others, on whom I had exercised mind and pen of old. It evidently matters much what book, prose or verse, lays hold of a man and of what book he happens, by temperament, teaching, training, or accident to lay hold. *The Nature of Things* can hardly be called a book to live with, but it is full of grandeur, sympathetic feeling, sublime sonorous music, that a reader may be glad and all the better for having near him. Lucretius like Macchiavelli is one of the great figures in literature who have gone through long spells of what is called immortality, bearing all the time a bad name. Singular is his story. His life was "invisible and dim". His one poem was never completed. Its duration hung upon a single manuscript. The manuscript appeared and disappeared for successive centuries. Whether his influence persisted in traces obscure and rare through the theologies and philosophies of the Middle Ages, scholars earnestly dispute. Some contend that in influence he was only second to Aristotle, and in continuous popularity only second to Virgil. Poet, savant, philosopher, he claims a place in three spheres. Nobody, I should think, reads his poem literally through. Mommsen finds Lucretius as savant absolutely unreadable. Others measure the poet, and insist that if you take a round figure for what you have a right to call poetry, you come to no more than 1800 lines out of 7400. More fastidious persons will have it there are only 700 really fine or memorable lines in the whole six books. About numbers this quarrel, like so many if not most quarrels of taste, is trivial. Even those who firmly choose to skip three-quarters still are conscious of the sound of a voice that is sublime, and the might of an imagination that soars on triumphant pinions beyond the flaming ramparts of the world. Whatever definition of poetry we may borrow from the poets themselves—whether "a speaking picture" or "invention" (Johnson) or "articulate music" (Dryden)—the tense,

defiant, concentrated, scornful, fervid, daring, and majestic verse of Lucretius is unique and his own.

It is not hard to see why he should have had this bad name. He was vehemently unorthodox on sacred fundamentals—a pagan, without religion, or the feeling for it. This last is what mankind are slowest to forgive. It is curious that, as I think, Dante finds no place for Lucretius in any of his three spheres of the other world, Inferno, Purgatory, or Paradise. Again, to readers who did not go much below the surface, he was what in our days is loosely, and somewhat promiscuously, labelled Pessimist. Pessimism—which, let us recollect, is a very different thing from misanthropy—has many a shape, and voices beyond counting. A learned Grecian of our time has assured us that Aeschylus, though a strictly religious pagan, like Pindar, may well be called a pessimist, nay, "the very patriarch and first preacher of pessimism", and of this the Grecian finds his illustration in Prometheus, who redeems men from the low estate into which they were born, instructs them in all art and knowledge to lift them up from their sorry plight, discovers without disparagement or blame that they listen without hearing, and in the end is repaid by cruel exile in iron chains upon the frosty Caucasus. However this may be, pessimism ranges from the passionate laments of Israel; the clear-eyed melancholy of the Greek; the savage and unholy imaginations of the man like Swift, who on his birthday ever read Job's third chapter; the crystallustre of Leopardi's unchangeable despair and lacerating irony; the transitory effusions of German *Weltschmerz*, or the effronteries of Zarathustra. Lucretius stands alone in the controversial force with which the genius of negation inspires him, and transforms into sublime reasons for firm act, so long as living breath is ours, the thought that the life of a man is no more than a dream of a shadow, the generation of men no more than the generation of leaves, putting forth to air and sky, then scattered by autumn winds to earth.

His philosophy was borrowed from a Greek, but Lucretius was Roman, and the furious havoc of Rome in his day may well have awakened in him energetic thought on the problems of the world, such as may happen even to men with none of his commanding genius in any age, ancient or our own, who have the misfortune to be brought into sight of the like ruin of distracted States and insensate men.

Among the most singular of those who have tried their hands at turning Lucretius into English must be counted the wife of the famous puritan, Colonel Hutchinson. She turned him into verse, she says, out

¹In 1917, John, Viscount Morley, as the title page describes him, published a work, in two volumes, entitled *Recollections* (New York, Macmillan, 1917). Book IV, Chapter V (= 2.113-130), is entitled *An Easter Digression*. The chapter describes a holiday, which at Easter time, in 1905, Viscount Morley spent in his library. The matters considered in pages 113-117 are of no special interest to a classical scholar. But the discussion of Lucretius, 118-130, is of great interest, not only in itself, but also because of certain well known facts in the intellectual life of Viscount Morley. Since the discussion is, besides, not likely to be easily accessible, it seems well worth while to reproduce it here.

C. K.

of youthful curiosity to understand things she heard so much discourse of at second-hand. In time the admirable woman grew to be as angry with Lucretius as if he had been an episcopalian royalist, with his "foppish casual dance of atoms", and the other senseless superstitions.

Later than Jeremy Taylor a verse translation by a writer, now unknown for other things, was printed by Creech in 1682, and went through many editions. Then the task fell by way of experiment into mightier hands. Having, with much ado, got clear of Virgil, Dryden undertook some pieces of Lucretius, in whom he found as his distinguishing character a certain kind of noble pride. Our untold debt to Dryden as the most splendid master of English prose, can by no means content us with the verse into which he Englished some of the finest lines in poetry:

'Tis pleasant safely to behold from shore
The rolling ship and hear the tempest roar. . . .

And so forth, in a style that had no note of either the vigour or the music of its original.

Crossing a long tract of time, from the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth, we still find English and French poets coming on to Lucretian ground. The most popular English poet of our Gladstonian era perhaps did not make the worthiest choice when he tacked his lofty, solemn, powerful verses called *Lucretius* on to a repellent, and not well-supported, myth about an amatory potion.

Sully-Prudhomme was a zealous Lucretian, in the respectable conviction that

Pour dissiper l'horreur de notre nuit profonde,
Le soleil ne peut rien, ni le jour éclatant,
Mais la Nature parle et la Raison l'entend!

He even began a translation, but was not sorry to find himself anticipated by what he felt bound to regard as the definite version of Lefevre (1876). Nor can an English ear be sorry either, for somehow the great open diapason of the Lucretian hexameter is grievously missing in this effort of a poet of proved grace and modern elegance.

Still stranger is it to find Lucretius invoked as his partner in devotion to the philosophic muse by Lamartine—that singular and winning genius, who was not only a poet, but, as competent French critics say, the very spirit of poetry itself; and who besides his poetry, by way of passing episode, overturned a throne by a book—a book of which the most potent contemporary novelist wittily said that it raised history to the level of fiction. . . . Lamartine courageously risked his life in victorious encounters with the Paris mob in 1848; he fascinated, persuaded, overwhelmed, ruled them in some of their stormiest hours. "Physical nature", <Lamartine> said, "was the theme of Lucretius; moral nature is mine". Far indeed is the journey from Lamartine's delicate faculty in gifts of poetic beauty to the Roman poet's unsparing wrestle with false divinities, misjudged destinies, a universe of desolating law. Yet

in both of them glowed the like vivid sympathies of soul.

Macaulay does justice to Lucretius's general poetic strength and elevation, even placing him before Virgil among the wearers of poetic crowns, but he despatches the philosophy as, for the most part, utterly worthless. This comes to much the same as Mommsen's verdict that Lucretius, dealing with atoms and void and the rest of his science, is unreadable. Most such verdicts rather miss the mark of history. The scientific theories were unverified, as they were bound to be, and so the philosophy associated with them was but the shadow of a system with no clear root in sound method. Yet the aerial labour of his imagination brought him marvelously far on the path towards the mountain heights of modern speculation. The world in which we live, and all the business of the elements, has become a sounding house of vast general laws. Of these laws it is the nature of things to be their subject. They are no sport of arbitrary, changeful, and capricious deities. Far distant, aloof, remote, dwell those divine beings. The doctrines of the Atom, again, the doctrines of special affinities, leave their traces after many centuries in the prevailing guesses of our present time upon the constitution of matter. Then in fine comes the great keynote from which we started. The relations of body and soul, the poet argues, well considered in all their analogies and phenomena in the universe of sentient being, bid us shake ourselves free from that terror of death, and the mysterious dread of the continuity of conscious individual life in an unknown hereafter, which so darkly overshadows, distracts, and paralyses the life of "momentary man". Of all the countless host of poets, preachers, philosophers, and theologians who, with every variety of aspect and approach, have held, by way either of promise to the good or menace to the bad, that all philosophy of life is in essence *commentatio mortis*, Lucretius is most strenuous, lofty, and insistent on enforcing the sombre lesson taught by the ancient Hebrew long ages before him: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest".

It was impossible that our own glorious literature should not contain, in prose and verse alike, a thousand things of superlative beauty about this universal theme, from Raleigh's "*O eloquent, just and mighty death*", or the thrilling dialogues in Claudio's prison, down to the most melting and melodious single verse in all the exercises of our English tongue, "*After life's fitful fever he sleeps well*", the tender summary of it all. Still, the famous passage of Lucretius at the close of his third book <3.894-899> is of such quality that I hardly find it in my heart to quarrel with the accomplished critic of to-day who suggests that "its lofty passion, its piercing tenderness, the stately roll of its cadences, is perhaps unmatched in human speech". . . .

Then there is the half of the fifth book which Monro pronounces unsurpassed, if not unequalled, in all Latin

poetry for varied beauty, earnest satire, and sublimity.

Critics have complained of *Paradise Lost* that Milton has taken a scheme of life for life itself. Of Lucretius at least this is not true. Though his own days are "invisible and dim", his poem is rich and glowing in the essence and spirit of the life of the world in itself. His gospel is a gospel of active energy and of sympathy all through the world of sentient being. I have already copied a short piece of Montaigne's, and there is a touch of the same feeling in Lucretius's thought of the aged ploughman after the ease and fruitfulness of earth's golden days have passed away—how the husbandman shakes his head and with deep sigh thinks that the labour of his hands comes to so little; how we wear out the strength of labouring men and their oxen. We do not know what Lucretius would have made of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, but Freedom, Justice, Pity is no bad battle-cry, and it is Lucretian. We may well be as indifferent as we like about atom and void, but it is pleasant to read of "light-sleeping dogs with faithful hearts in their breasts, and woolly flocks, and beasts of burden whom we protect and feed in requital of their useful services". Or the picture of the Molossian hounds, "when they essay fondly to lick their whelps with their tongue, or toss them with their feet, and snapping at them make a feint with lightly closing teeth of swallowing, though with gentle forbearance they caress them with a yelping sound greatly different from that which they utter when left alone in a house they bay, or when they shrink away with a crouching body howling from blows".

The place of death in Lucretius naturally brings a reader, with good authors at his elbow, to Lessing's *Laocoon*—"dear Lessing", as George Eliot called him—one of the rare books that, like Grotius or Adam Smith, startled the world by a sudden shaft of new light diffusing itself over changed tracts of thought for all time to come. Though first suggested to him by Burke's *Sublime and Beautiful*, of which Lessing made himself translator, it was a fruitful surprise in the originality of its contribution to the philosophy of art, and the conditions of poetry and painting. Not any less remarkable, and it brings him involuntarily into line with Lucretius, is the little tract with which he shortly followed *Laocoon*, on the images of death in ancient art—a plea against the notion that to the classic world the symbol of death took the repulsive shape of the skeleton, the Arch Fear in a visible form. Goethe records how, in his youth, they were all enchanted with the beauty of the thought that the ancients represented Death as the brother of Sleep, each in form the semblance of the other, twin brothers in the arms of Night. The enchantment was not universal, for in common faith death is the penalty of Sin; hence it was natural to symbolize it by a terrifying image. Lessing's reply was that the Christian faith has not revealed this dreadful truth in order to make us despair,

but promises a blessed end to devout resignation and contrition of heart. The Scripture itself, moreover, he goes on, speaks of the Angel of Death: why should not the artist give up the hateful skeleton, and put us in possession of the better image of an angel? "Only religion misconceived can draw us away from the beautiful, and it is an evidence for the true religion properly understood, the more it everywhere restores us to beauty". Whether or not he accurately divined all the transformations and conclusions by which the skeleton came to be taken for the image of death, Lessing was felt to have carried his law of beauty into supreme heights of art and life. In those days, sang Schiller in *Die Götter Griechenlands*, "no grisly skeleton entered the chamber, and stood before the deathbed". So, in short, the skeleton was displaced on the funereal monument by a gracious genie bearing in all simplicity a reversed torch or some symbol of the resurrection.

To nobody, we might well have supposed, was the spirit of Lucretius so little congenial as it was to Goethe, the stormiest of poets to the most composed. Yet, as it appears, when Goethe came back from his travels in Italy, he was full-blown pagan, and was not slow to express high thoughts of *The Nature of Things*. For some twenty years he encouraged its first translation into German (1820), and even took an active share in the task. Vitally different as the vast march of time had made them, the two stand out, each of them a grand compound of poetry, scientific aim, and practical philosophy. Goethe applauds Lucretius as a diligent observer and explorer of nature, as master of strange powers of living delineation of nature's phenomena. All these, joined to an amazing elevation of mind and speech, assured his immortality as man, Roman, philosopher, and poet all in one. His book, says Goethe, who does not often show much care for historic values, is one of the most remarkable documents in the world, because it shows how men thought and felt on the secrets of the universe between the sixth and eighth decades before the Christian era.

It is interesting to note how in the latest hours at which the Christian era has yet arrived, Lucretius is still a living combatant as he was in the pagan era. The most brilliant English apologist of our day, I should think, has been Martineau, and when the apologist comes to deal with the "great mountain-chain of death", and life to come, it is to the rolling hexameters from Lucretius he goes for adverse texts that he made it his business to overthrow. Goethe himself, so widely counted "Europe's sagest head", may well be said to be the founder, guide, and oracle of an informal, nameless, and unorganized communion of his own—men and women content to live their lives independently of two articles of such profound and saturating belief as those against which Lucretius wages his impassioned war. Some would say the Greeks found it all out long before either Roman or German, and end the matter in some plangent lines in a fragment of Euripides. . . .

Earth the most great, and Heaven on high!
 Father is He to man and god;
 And She, who taketh to her sod
 The cloud-flung rivers of the Sky

And beareth offspring, men and grass
 And beasts in all their kinds, indeed
 Mother of All. And every seed
 Earth-gendered back to Earth shall pass,
 And back to Heaven the seeds of Sky;
 Seeing all things into all may range
 And, sundering, show new shapes of change,
 But never that which is shall die.

GILBERT MURRAY.

Or the better known lines:

I hold him happiest
 Who, before going quickly whence he came,
 Hath looked unrieving on these majesties,
 The world-wide Sun, the stars, water and clouds
 And fire. Live, Parmeno, a hundred years,
 Or a few weeks, these thou wilt always see,
 And never, never, any greater things.

Ibid.

This is Menander. For him Goethe had the liveliest admiration. He calls him pure, noble, cheerful, altogether invaluable, even though unhappily but a fragment. Yet if one demands an antistrophe to this strophe of Menander, I can think of none more apt than Goethe's own famous and beautiful psalm of life, known as *Das Göttliche*. From a very different point of view Browning's readers will not forget his sombre lines under the title "Prospice".

THE LONELY WORD IN VERGIL

"All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word". Thus has Tennyson described one of the most notable qualities of Vergil's style. On one occasion Tennyson was asked to give an example of what he meant by the "lonely word", and he replied that *cunctantem*, Aen. 6.211, illustrated what he intended when he wrote his famous line. It is interesting to note that this very word has been criticized by more than one editor as "unfortunate", in view of the fact that Vergil has already told us that the golden branch would readily follow Aeneas's grasp if he was called by the Fates. The editors have been too literal-minded. Tennyson saw something beyond the face value of the word. To Aeneas in the excitement of the great moment there seemed delay where none existed. Because of what the poet has told us above the word gains increased significance in the portrayal of Aeneas's eagerness, and the contrast in the literal phrases really helps rather than hinders the thought.

Vergil's inimitable style was due largely to his capacity for making words carry more than their face value. In the powers of suggestiveness his words express ideas and emotions more effectively than if he had used words mathematically equivalent to the several ideas. This trait may be called indirectness, condensation, or suggestion, but the essential thing is

that the poet, discerning that the truth is often more eloquently expressed by an appeal to the imagination than by an appeal to the intellect, and finding that the ordinary symbols are inadequate for this purpose, therefore employ words which transcend their ordinary functions. The added meaning may be due largely to the situation created by the poet. Though the story of the sufferings of Troy fills an entire book, it is brief (the poet tells us) in comparison with what might be told. As Dido listens with silent eyes and as what she leaves unsaid is far more eloquent than what she says, so Vergil speaks to us in this silent, eloquent fashion. Only the rarest powers of imagination and reflection and the most delicate sense of propriety could have guided him so unerringly in this practice.

We might wish that Tennyson had given further examples of the "lonely word", as they appeared to his poetic mind. Possibly some in the following collection may be classed with his solitary example. They are taken from Aeneid 1-6.

1.26. *repostum*. Vergil regularly uses *repono* in the sense of 'storing away'. I think the same meaning is present here. The judgment of Paris is stored away in Juno's mind; she clings to her grudge as something which has become dear to her. A neutral word with the mere sense of *hidden* would not have revealed so well her state of mind.

1.36. *servans* continues and confirms the idea of *repostum*. This grudge is something to be guarded, or "nursed", as Professor Fairclough well translates it. A word like *habeo* would have been quite inadequate.

1.209. *premit* does far more than a form of *pono* would have done. Without directly saying so, the poet shows us something of the struggle that goes on in his hero's heart.

1.418, *corripuere*. In their great eagerness to arrive at the queen's court they appeared to 'seize' the way. Compare Shakespeare's "He seemed in running to devour the way". Vergil seems deliberately to have chosen this word in preference to some neutral word.

1.719. *insidat* means 'rests upon', but it also suggests hostile intent, as in 2.616.

2.3. *renovare* depicts better than *narrare* would have done the horror of the struggle. The mere telling of the story is the renewing of the sorrow.

2.11. *breviter* suggests that all that may be said is brief in comparison with what must be left unsaid.

2.19. *penitus* is excellently descriptive (though indirectly so) of the great size of the horse.

2.42. *procul* portrays better even than the accompanying *ardens* the great eagerness of Laocoon.

2.51-53. *tremens* . . . *gemitum*. I believe the poet means to suggest that by these ominous tokens even the inanimate spear and horse are trying to warn the Trojans.

2.237, *scandit*. Though the walls have been levelled to the ground, the horse climbs, as a wolf leaping over the barrier into the sheepfold. Compare *salu* in 6.515. These two words suggest the hostile intent of the horse.

2.329. *fundit* expresses more than 'empties'; it implies also the idea of great number.

2.348. *frustra*. This word and words of kindred meaning (*nequiquam, inrita, inutile, imbelle*) haunt the entire second book. Better than the progress of the story they show the helplessness of the Trojans.

2.363. *antiqua*. The use of this word in this connection adds indirectly to the impressiveness of the fall.

2.674. *patri*. Why did Vergil not use the metrically equivalent *mihi*? Because an appeal must be made to the paternal instinct.

3.273. *execramur*. There is no need after this word to tell how large a part Ulysses had played in their suffering.

4.64. *inhians*. The poet by this word suggests better than by a direct statement Dido's intense eagerness.

4.67. *vivit*. The wound is silent and yet it lives. The consuming effect of the wound is brought out more forcibly by the contrast between *tacitum* and *vivit*.

4.308. *moritura*. Here and elsewhere the poet makes Dido tell us indirectly what she with her delicate intuition realized must be her fate.

4.323. *hospes*. 'Guest' and no longer 'husband'! What a gulf has opened between the two! The power of the suggestiveness of the word made even Vergil's voice falter as he read it.

4.467-468. *sola . . . incommitata . . . deserta*. The lonely word repeated. She has broken away from the social order and is an outcast.

4.473. *sedent*. No transitory guests are they.

4.598. *aiunt*. Does the poet need to say that she doubts the truth of Aeneas's reputed piety?

4.692. *ingemuit*. Henry says, "There is no so touching word in the whole Aeneid as this *ingemuit*, placing as it does before the mind capable of such sympathies the whole heart-rending history in a single retrospective glance". The lonely word does what a long discussion would fail to do.

5.224. *spoliata*. Professor Knapp says, "A fine word here; the loss of the pilot was an outrage against the ship".

6.260. *invade*; 268. *obscuri*; 269. *vacuas . . . inania*; 425. *inremabilis*; 429. *atra*, and 466. *extremum*. All these words are rich in the powers of suggestion. The last, *extremum*, seems to me to carry the melancholy suggestiveness of Poe's "nevermore". Fate decrees that in all eternity Aeneas and Dido shall never meet again.

Many of the lonely words will not be evident on the first reading or even on the twentieth. New meanings and new suggestions are always being revealed. Therein lies one of the beauties of Vergil's style. In whetting one's artistic sense upon the lonely words and golden phrases of Vergil, an aesthetic power is achieved hardly surpassed otherwise.

CARLETON COLLEGE,
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ARTHUR L. KEITH.

THE HIGH SCHOOL LATIN COURSE

In the general wrongness of the whole world at the present moment nothing seems to me more out of joint than our High School Latin course, not in the material it employs, but in the use we make of that material. When I say "our", I am indicting equally the College Entrance committees and the Secondary School teachers. The first year work, being chiefly a matter of forms, connects itself solely with words in our language and offers us little of historic or literary association. But Caesar and Cicero give us documents of the greatest historical value, besides an opportunity for practice in our own sentence-formation; and Vergil offers us a masterpiece in poetry, of style so magical and compelling that one who opens his eyes and his ears cannot fail to fall beneath its spell—a poem that ranks with the world's greatest in literature and that can serve as a vehicle through which we may teach the enduring qualities that characterize any masterpiece. This material we do not use, but abuse.

In the Gallic War we have the first historical document dealing directly with those westward migrations that began on the steppes of Asia ages before the dawn of history and have continued till they have landed us and our compatriots on this continent. We see, in the Gallic War, that tide hurled back for a time, a solid dyke built up to stem it. In the struggle with Vercingetorix we see the foreshadowing of the national spirit of to-day, we see the dyke so patiently and persistently constructed during seven years all but swept away. In that struggle we, personally and individually, have a stake on both sides. It was our ancestors, in spirit and many times in fact, who were striving to assert their liberty and to thrust off the Roman centralizing force that was to constitute Gaul a barrier against barbarian invasion for centuries. But suppose they had gained their will? Suppose they had conquered and killed Caesar at Alesia? The Roman power would probably have sunk into ignominious decay three or four centuries sooner, overwhelmed by wave after wave of the hordes that were pressing at her barriers. There would have been no time for the Roman collection and study of Greek art and philosophy and literature; there would have been no treasures of manuscripts copied and hoarded up; there would have been no Constantinople, no Renaissance, no Columbus and no Second Year Latin classes in America wondering as they see the whole scroll of history unwound from their Latin text.

In Cicero also we have material equally vital for Americans. In his uncertainties in dealing with the Catilinarians, Cicero shows us the weaknesses and the limitations of the Roman constitution. The inventors of the idea of a State managed by all the free men had not developed the details of their machine to a point where it was equal to every emergency. Their engine was of a primitive type; we have learned from their mistakes. Government is a growth; laws are changed from time to time; we must be careful that they change

always in the right direction and are always wise and well weighed¹.

There is one other aspect of Cicero that is useful to students, from the broadest point of view, namely, his sentence-formation. In spite of the different position of the verb, our sentence-structure is essentially Ciceronian. Take any of the great oratory of the late War and you will find paragraph after paragraph of sentences balanced or climaxed (I hope this word will be allowed) in Cicero's most characteristic manner. Impassioned prose of to-day, as of all past centuries of English literature, provided it deal with themes elevated and intricate, falls into Ciceronian measures. It is our inheritance through the English Prayer-Book and one of the greatest glories of our language. Heaven send that we are not about to lose this noble style, taking in its place the disjointed sentences of the 'Movies' and the childish succession of simple clauses of the cheap magazines! Our English courses in the High School will not help to preserve it for us. It is no longer the business of English classes to teach students to write. If this great quality of our tongue is to be saved, it must be because our Latin teachers show its powers and its harmonies to our Third Year students and give them practice in using it both in written sight translation and in original work of their own in English.

But in the fourth year are seen our worst sins of omission and commission. O Roman Vergil, what crimes are done in thy name! Thine ocean roll of rhythm sounds not in our Latin classes! With music as inspiring as any symphony, with color in the very syllables as rich as any painting, with phrases that pierce to the heart of things and linger in the memory as only Shakespeare's or Homer's or Dante's—or Vergil's—can—with all this incomparable glory waiting to shed its splendor upon us, what do we talk about? Greek accusatives and poetic ways of prohibiting! Even the lightness of touch and tenderness of the poet in telling the story escape us. Appreciation of style may be a difficult thing to teach, but the gentleness that breathes through the Aeneid, that reveals the *anima candida* of its author, who can fail to be touched by it?

This, then, is the material for the second, third, and fourth years of our High School course, a mine of imperishable interest and beauty. But with the utmost economy of time the Secondary School teacher who cares for Latin from this point of view cannot give her classes more than a glimpse of the treasure awaiting them. In the second year we are still handicapped by the large number of those who elected Latin, though their intellectual grade should have excluded them from these classes. In the third and the fourth years we have to teach not only what the Colleges are asking now, but must do over again enough First and Second Year work to atone for poor teaching and lack of departmental coordination in the lower semesters, as well as

for the poor standard of work imposed in First and Second Year classes because of the low grade of intelligence of many of the pupils.

But there is no doubt in my mind that Latin ought to be taught from the point of view I have outlined above. This is one of the steps necessary, if we are to save it from following Greek. And the first step necessary to insure the teaching of Latin from a humanistic standpoint is an agreement of the Colleges and the Secondary Schools upon a definite course of study for High Schools with the elimination of much of the grammar that is now demanded and the addition of the elements now so sadly lacking. Much of our grammar is merely dead stuff, if we test it by the question, 'Does this help towards speed and accuracy in sight translation?' Teaching how to translate should be our first care beginning with the second year, and every point in grammar that is not absolutely necessary for speedy comprehension of the text in sight translation should cease to be a matter of drill for College Entrance examinations and become a thing to be merely mentioned in passing². In this matter it seems to me the colleges ought to defer to the secondary teachers.

The definition of the content of the literary and historical side of our work will be less difficult than the elimination of grammar questions. In the second year we ought to choose the parts that deal with Caesar's conflicts with migrating nations and his final struggle with Vercingetorix. In the third year all our present material is admirably adapted to show the primitive character of the Roman constitution, its weakness and its collapse. In Vergil, comprehension of the story must of course come first; but it seems to me that this involves knowing many things never mentioned in College Entrance examinations. How can one be really understanding the story who does not know the difference between a *crater* and a *palera*, or what Roman eating and drinking customs were, or what a Roman house was like (how, without that knowledge, can any one excuse Aeneas's inaction at the death of Priam?), or what ancient oracles and temples were like in their arrangement, furnishing, ministration, etc., or what a bireme was, inside and out, and so on almost indefinitely? Yet I cannot recall a College Entrance examination that has asked about any of these things. For fostering interest in ancient life they are much more necessary and illuminating than a knowledge of what poets influenced Vergil's work and what he owed to each one, or what the figure *litotes* is and where it can be found in a sight translation. But how much longer can we afford to ignore Vergil's delicacy of treatment,

¹In a recent examination, Greek accusatives and poetic forms of prohibitions were emphasized. A thorough comprehension of the Greek accusative is necessary to speedy translation; but why dwell on *ne . . . prohibete* as a variant from a prose construction? Prose prohibitions must be learned, of course, because they are so different from our English equivalents; but, since any body could guess the meaning of *ne . . . prohibete*, why stop to discuss it at all, except to make a passing comment that it is not like the prose? In fact, most of the poetic constructions deserve no more than passing attention, with a brief summary occasionally of all that have been found. Not in them can we find the difference between prose and poetry.

²See my paper, The Catilinarian Orations: A Milestone in the Progress of Democratic Government, THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY, 14:2-3.

the matchless music of the lines as they change in rhythm to accord with sense, the tone color, as musicians call it, of vowels and consonants, the recurrence of similes, and all the other qualities that this poem shares with the deathless masterpieces of literature?

'But', you protest, 'you are asking the Colleges to accept for entrance what the Secondary Schools choose to grant, and not what the Colleges consider necessary'. No, we are quite ready to submit our product to a searching inspection; we feel that this is necessary. But we do ask the Colleges to confer with us on the essentials of our High School course, giving us more latitude to teach the humanities.

It is only in the third and the fourth years that we really have a chance to do this; for our First and Second Year classes are half filled with children who get only a minimum of benefit from the course, while those capable of better work are bored. Remove the College requirements for Latin and you almost remove our Third and Fourth Year classes. Handicapped as we are, we cannot make the work so attractive in the first and second years that pupils will want to go on. Latin is difficult to learn, yet the exactions are just as difficult now for our four year course as they were twenty-five years ago, when only the children of the well-to-do entered the High School. Yet now our High School population reaches much further down into the ranks of the people and we are gathering into every class any child who wants to elect that subject regardless of whether his mental ability justifies his pursuing any such course. The worst of these misfits fail and drop out during the first or the second year; but many of them persist to the end of the second year, winning their points for graduation but slowing the gait of the class materially. There is no doubt that they do gain some advantage from having studied Latin for two years; but, meanwhile, the children of real intelligence mark time and do not gain the skill and the speed of which they are capable.

In looking over the Comprehensive Examination of last spring, I could only reflect with sorrow how long it had been since I had had a class for which the Second Year sight translation and prose would have been at all possible. Yet several of these later classes have at the end of their fourth year been reasonably ready to stand the College entrance test. But the struggle to get them to that point becomes each year more difficult. The solution of this trouble is, of course, to know just what measure of intellectual ability is required to do College preparatory Latin and to put the fortunate pupils who possess it in a class by themselves, while the others, also in their own class, gain what advantage their poor wits are capable of receiving without shackling the brains of their luckier brothers. But is not this solution so remote that we must not wait till School boards and superintendents can persuade themselves to it, but hasten to apply what remedy we can at once?

In the other subjects offered in the High School there has undoubtedly been a slackening of the entire course

to meet the altered human material with which we deal. What else does the introduction of an extra half-year of algebra mean? And is it only a symptom of old age that the older teachers universally lament the classes of twenty and twenty-five years ago? But it is precisely a slackening that I hope we may avoid in our Latin course. A boy who understands what Caesar is driving at will translate better; a girl who sympathizes with Cicero's difficulties will discover a wider vocabulary to represent his emotions. Release us from the burden of grammar for grammar's sake and let us out into a wider field. Make our sight translations real tests of translation and not largely vocabulary tests. Make our prose composition tests as long as you please, but let them test knowledge of constructions that need to be learned thoroughly in order to be translated quickly and idiomatically when found in the Latin text. And then give us some questions that will show what real grasp of the story as a whole the pupil has acquired, what comprehension of style, what appreciation of the music of language, what knowledge of the heart of Vergil and his relation to his age and to Augustus, as mirrored in the Aeneid.

We have not time to breathe in our Latin course, yet I suppose we are a fairly usual Public High School, with perhaps no more handicaps than any other Public High School. But, as things are tending now, it will not be long before we shall have to admit that we cannot compass in four years what the Colleges demand, and, if our students want to present Latin for entrance points, they will have to take lessons outside. Yet there seems to be no such tendency in the modern languages or in English or in science. Are not the Colleges being rather unduly severe in their requirements in Latin? If a stern barrier is necessary to stop all but the ablest, are not we classicists in error if we allow Latin to be the material out of which that barrier is built? We believe in Latin as contributing materially to the enjoyment of literature, to the comprehension of modern life, and to the ability to analyze and combine ideas in thinking out any abstract problem; are we willing, then, to have it made a bugbear to the brightest of the coming generation, or to have them think of it as a subject not connected with literature or life or reason in any form?

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REVIEW

The Master of the Offices in the Later Roman and Byzantine Empires. By Arthur E. R. Boak. New York: The Macmillan Co. (1919). University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series, Volume XIV. Aspects of Roman Law and Administration. Part I. The Master of the Offices. Pp. x + 160. Paper covers. \$1.00 net. This handsomely printed publication is the "special study" promised by the author in Harvard Studies in

Classical Philology 26 (1915), 73, in explaining the omission of the *magister officiorum* from his elaborate dissertation upon The Roman *Magistri* in the Civil and Military Service of the Empire. Like the former monograph this has been well planned and thoroughly carried out. The special literature, like the *Notitia*, the *Constitutiones*, the *De Caerimoniis*, the *De Magistratibus*, inscriptions, etc., has been carefully excerpted, but one might suppose that, in the general literature of the Empire, especially Christian history and biography, which is but seldom utilised, something of value and occasionally perhaps of more human interest might have been gleaned.

To the handling of the theme proper is prefixed a brief discussion of the Roman *magistri* in general from the earliest times, to which part of the work Appendix A, references to the title *magister* in inscriptions, belongs. One has the feeling that the author collected material on the designation *magister*, intending to write a history of the mastership, but finding that the title was too vague and elastic (for one might well hesitate to write a study of functionaries in general, social, educational, military, civil, etc.), he abandoned the attempt, but very properly preserved the material for those who might have occasion to employ certain portions of it in special studies. Apropos of this material, however, I miss all reference to Isidore (e.g. on the dictator as *magister populi*), Servius (*magister equitum*), Ps-Acro (e.g. *magistros bestiarum*, a term which, if I mistake not, Dr. Boak does not list), the Latin scholiasts in general, the grammarians, and many Christian writers, from whom perhaps something worth while might have been secured. I mention this, not as ungrateful for the extensive material collected, but merely to indicate to those who may wish to pursue the subject further that not every scrap of evidence has been collected yet, as one might perhaps have carelessly inferred from the introductory sentence. In particular no attempt has been made to collect all references to the title *magister equitum*, and the discussion of this designation and that of *magister populi* (dictator) in the text above, is hardly adequate for two such ancient and important positions in the state.

The study proper is an attempt to treat the entire history of the Mastership in the spirit of Seck and Bury, one of whom had explained its origin, the other set forth its full development in the ninth century. Chapter III takes up the history of the office, Chapter IV its competence, Chapter V its titles, honors, and privileges, all very clearly and conscientiously set forth, even to such details as, "In admitting the senate and the ex-Prefect to their places the Emperor gave the signal to the Praepositus, who nodded to the Master, who in turn signalled to the Master of Ceremonies, . . . who summoned the dignitaries" (page 100). Such details, if not very valuable directly and in themselves, are nevertheless notable for the oblique light which they cast on Byzantinism, serving to characterize the institution and the office, and to leave a more vivid

impression of the spirit which informed all the functions and variations of the mastership, than much of what is conventionally regarded as more serious historical data.

Of course these chapters are difficult to summarize; suffice it to say that the conclusions are not revolutionary, and new interpretations are restricted to minor points, as was of course inevitable in a study which does not pretend to be other than the filling in of a large-scale outline.

There follows a useful bibliography of "ancient authors cited, and of modern works most frequently referred to", where, in passing, it might be noted that the entries for Theophylactus Simocatta (for whom in any event the edition by de Boor, 1887, should have been used) and Zonaras have been run together at some time in the course of publication, with rather surprising results, while some of the modern works listed have been referred to, so far as I observed, only once, so that a few others, mentioned at least as often as that, would have made the list complete, and so even more helpful. Appendix A, which follows, has been spoken of above. Appendix B, a list of the Masters during the two periods, i.e. active and honorary, would seem to be fairly complete, but in view of the absence of other than what we might call the technical and official ancient literature in the field of administration, may not be entirely so.

The whole is a work of learning, critical ability, industry, and admirable powers of exposition. Historians and philologists will welcome more studies of this kind from Dr. Boak's pen.

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THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT SACRIFICE

IN THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 8.144 Dr. Kent told a humorous story apropos of the feeling that prompted offerings to the dead. An incident in the girlhood of Jane Addams makes equally realistic the spirit of ancient sacrifice. In *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, 16-17, she writes:

We erected an altar beside the stream, to which for several years we brought all the snakes we killed during our excursions, no matter how long the toilsome journey which we had to make with a limp snake dangling between two sticks. I remember rather vaguely the ceremonial performed upon this altar one autumn day, when we brought as further tribute one out of every hundred of the black walnuts which we had gathered, and then poured over the whole a pitcher full of cider, fresh from the cider mill on the barn floor. I think we had also burned a favorite book or two upon this pyre of stones. The entire affair carried on with such solemnity was probably the result of one of those imperative impulses under whose compulsion children seek a ceremonial which shall express their sense of identification with man's primitive life and their familiar kinship with the remotest past.

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